

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANKARA 01653 271540Z

60

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8141

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 1653

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT TU

SUBJECT: STATE OF THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

REF: ANKARA 1443

BEGIN SUMMARY: POSITIVE STEPS TO RESOLVE THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS, PROBABLY IN FIRST WEEK OF MARCH ARE WIDELY EXPECTED HERE. HOWEVER, THE OUTCOME REMAINS UNCLEAR ALTHOUGH AN INTENSIFICATION OF MANEUVERING IS LIKELY. END SUMMARY.

1. CURRENTLY THE MOST COMMONLY EXPRESSED POLITICAL OPINION HERE IS THAT TURKEY'S GOVERNMENT CRISIS (NOW IN ITS SIXTH MONTH) WILL BE RESOLVED ONCE PARLIAMENT HAS MET ITS CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATION TO PASS THE BUDGET BILL BY FEBRUARY 28.

IN A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH THE GERMAN PAPER DIE WELT, PRIMIN IRMAK PREDICTED THAT PRESIDENT KORUTURK WOULD PROBABLY NAME A NEW PRIMIN IN MARCH AND THAT CERTAINLY IT WOULD NOT BE IRMAK AGAIN. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF IRMAK'S

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PAGE 02 ANKARA 01653 271540Z

CABINET ARE SAID TO BE ANXIOUS TO LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT AS SOON

AS POSSIBLE.

2. HOWEVER, NO ONE IS ABLE TO PREDICT WHO WILL FORM THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE DEADLOCK AMONG THE PARTIES CONTINUES. HOWEVER, BOTH OF THE MAJOR CONTENDERS, THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) LED BY ECEVIT AND THE NATIONALIST FRONT (JUSTICE, NATIONAL SALVATION, REPUBLICAN RELIANCE AND NATIONAL ACTION PARTIES), ARE HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR OWN PROSPECTS.

3. THE RPP'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE CONTINUES TO BE EARLY ELECTIONS, AND ITS LEADERS HAVE BEEN PRIVATELY VOICING GREAT CONFIDENCE THAT PARLIAMENT WILL VOTE FOR ELECTIONS IN JUNE. THEY EXPECT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) TO JOIN THE RPP IN SUCH A VOTE, AND BELIEVE THAT THE NATIONALIST FRONT WILL SOON ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT CANNOT FORM A GOVERNMENT.

4. HOWEVER, THE FRONT SO FAR HAS SHOWN NO SIGN OF GIVING UP, ON THE CONTRARY, THE FRONT LEADERS ISSUED A STATEMENT FEBRUARY 24 ANNOUNCING THAT THEY HAD REACHED "COMPLETE AGREEMENT" ON AMENDING THE ELECTION LAW TO PERMIT JOINT LISTS IN THE NEXT ELECTION. THE FRONT PARTIES ALSO CONGRATULATED THEMSELVES ON HAVING SUCCEEDED IN "LEGISLATING IMPORTANT BILLS, ON HAVING FORMED THE BUDGET COMMITTEE AND ON HAVING KEPT THE BUDGET DEBATES ON SCHEDULE." ALTHOUGH THEY DID NOT CALL ON KORUTURK TO NAME THEM TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, ALL FRONT REPRESENTATIVES WE HAVE TALKED WITH RECENTLY APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL GIVE THEM THE DESIGNATION SHORTLY AFTER PASSAGE OF THE BUDGET BILL.

5. BUT PRESIDENT KORUTURK IS SAID TO BE STILL RELUCTANT TO DESIGNATE A SUCCESSOR TO IRMAK UNTIL HE IS REASONABLY CERTAIN THAT HIS DESIGNEE CONTROLS A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY OF 226 VOTES. THE FRONT'S TOTAL IS STILL AT BEST 218. THE REMAINDER THEY HOPE TO PICK UP FROM DEFECTORS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, BUT BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE INCENTIVE FOR DP DEPUTIES TO DESERT THEIR PARTY, WITHOUT STRONG ASSURANCE THAT THE FRONT WILL FORM A GOVERNMENT, THE FRONT'S PROSPECTS OF A MAJORITY REMAIN CLOUDY.

6. THE DP IS STILL IN A PRECARIOUS POSITION. IF THE FRONT WON ENOUGH DEFECTIONS FROM THE DP TO AMEND THE ELECTION
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PAGE 03 ANKARA 01653 271540Z

LAW SO AS TO PERMIT JOINT LISTS, (THE RPP IS TOTALLY OPPOSED TO JOINT LISTS SINCE IT WOULD SUFFER FROM THE COORDINATED PLACEMENT OF CENTER-RIGHT CANDIDATES ON THE BALLOTS) THE DP PROBABLY WOULD BE WIPE OUT IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS UNLESS IT JOINED THE FRONT. HOWEVER, COALESCING WITH THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP) UNDER DEMIREL IN THE FRONT IS ANATHEMA TO THE DP LEADERSHIP AND WOULD DESTROY THE PARTY'S REASON FOR BEING. ON THE OTHER HAND, JOINING WITH THE RPP EVEN ON A SHORT-TERM BASIS

FOR EARLY ELECTIONS, WOULD MOST LIKELY LEAD TO A SPLIT IN THE PARTY AND LEAVE THE TWO PARTIES WITHOUT ENOUGH VOTES TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. THE EFFORTS OF EX-PRESIDENT BAYAR TO BRING THE JP AND DP TOGETHER HAVE LED TO A BREACH IN THE DP; STILL UNRESOLVED, WHICH MAY LEAD A NUMBER OF DP DEPUTIES EITHER TO JOIN OR TO SUPPORT THE FRONT.

7. ALL THE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN PROPOSED SINCE THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT RESIGNED SEPTEMBER 17 -- INCLUDING VARIATIONS OF A JP-RPP COALITION, A MINORITY GOVERNMENT AND AN INDEPENDENT-LED COALITION -- REMAIN AVAILABLE IF SUPPORT COULD BE FOUND FOR THEM. PERHAPS AT PRESENT THE LEAST DIFFICULT OF THESE ALTERNATIVES MIGHT BE AN AGREEMENT ON AN INDEPENDENT PRIMIN, EITHER IRMAK OR SOMEONE ELSE, ON CONDITIONS ASSURING BROAD-BASED PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT. HOWEVER, THIS SUPPORT PROBABLY COULD COME ABOUT ONLY WITH A RPP-NATIONAL FRONT AGREEMENT ON EARLY ELECTIONS, THE DIFFICULTY OF WHICH HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

8. ON BALANCE IT APPEARS TO US THAT WHILE A RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS IS NOT YET EVIDENT, AN INTENSIFICATION OF MANEUVERING IS LIKELY.
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